

## Leviticus 20:11-27 - Thursday, February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010

- Last week we only made it to verse 10 in chapter 20 and we'll actually start there tonight as we, Lord willing, finish this chapter.
- My sense is that it would be an enormous mistake to rush through chapter 20, even though its content seems nebulous. Here's why:
- 1<sup>st</sup>: if misunderstood chapter 20 could paint God as being unfair for imposing the death penalty for sins such as adultery like in verse 10.
- 2<sup>nd</sup>: we could fail to see the seriousness of sin and how God forbids it because it's bad, seeing it only as bad because it's forbidden.

- Understanding this will help us in understanding that imposing a seemingly harsh penalty is for our own good, and because of His love.
- We do err when we misinterpret God's justness as being mutually exclusive from God's love, when in fact God is both just and loving.
- If unjust in His judgments then He's unloving in His judgments as a judge who's lenient on a perpetrator would be unloving to the victim.

- Now, the question may be; "if God is both just and loving by imposing the death penalty for adultery, why aren't more people dead?"
- At the risk of presenting an oversimplification, the short answer is because they were under the law then, but we are under grace now.
- In other words, if someone committed the sin of adultery in Old Testament times, it carried with it the "death penalty," under the law.

- One might wonder if they actually put to death anyone caught in the act of adultery. The reality is that they didn't because they wouldn't.
- The reason for this is because the "eyewitnesses," would be the ones to cast the first stone in the carrying out of the stoning to death.
- One thought is that the required "two or three eyewitness," were unwilling to "cast the first stone," because they themselves were guilty.
- Many of you may be thinking about the time that they brought the woman caught in adultery to Jesus, which is found in John 8:1-11.

**John 8:1-11** 1 But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. 2 At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. 3 The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group 4 and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. 5 **In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?**" 6 They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. 7 When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." 8 Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. 9 At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. 10 Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" 11 "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin." NIV

- The fact that they didn't bring the man with her indicates that it wasn't so that she would be stoned to death, it was to trap Jesus.
- Interesting, Jesus would say; "he who is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone." They were guilty, but hadn't been caught.
- The bottom line is, Jesus is both just and loving by not condemning the woman to death, because in Christ, there's no condemnation.
- I realize that was a very long introduction to the completion of this chapter, but now I think we're ready to pick up our study in verse 11.

11 The man who lies with his father's wife has uncovered his father's nakedness; both of them shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them. 12 If a man lies with his daughter-in-law, both of them shall surely be put to death. They have committed perversion. Their blood shall be upon them.

- Now we sort of round a corner as God once again addresses sexual immorality. Here in verses 11 and 12 He is dealing with incest.

13 If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them.

- Here again God deals with the sin of homosexuality. Notice He called incest a perversion, but He calls homosexuality an abomination.
- Be that as it may, these detestable practices were punishable with the death penalty for what should be deemed as obvious reasons.

14 If a man marries a woman and her mother, it is wickedness. They shall be burned with fire, both he and they, that there may be no wickedness among you.

- One has suggested that this burning with fire was a branding with a hot iron and not a burning alive for marrying a mother and daughter.
- Another commentator says that the burning took place after the death of the criminal by stoning, or strangling according to Joshua 7:25.
- Suffice it to say, this was wickedness in the site of the Lord, and He declares that there be no wickedness like this among the Israelites.

15 If a man mates with an animal, he shall surely be put to death, and you shall kill the animal. 16 If a woman approaches any animal and mates with it, you shall kill the woman and the animal. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood is upon them.

- I'm won't expound on this except to say that bestiality brings a man or woman created in God's image down to the level of an animal.

17 'If a man takes his sister, his father's daughter or his mother's daughter, and sees her nakedness and she sees his nakedness, it is a wicked thing. And they shall be cut off in the sight of their people. He has uncovered his sister's nakedness. He shall bear his guilt. 18 If a man lies with a woman during her sickness and uncovers her nakedness, he has exposed her flow, and she has uncovered the flow of her blood. Both of them shall be cut off from their people. 19 You shall not uncover the nakedness of your mother's sister nor of your father's sister, for that would uncover his near of kin. They shall bear their guilt.

- It may seem that God is just repeating Himself here when He reiterates the sexual sin of incest however, there are reasons for this.
- First, I believe that this speaks to how pronounced and prevalent this practice was amongst the pagans in the land they would inherit.
- Second, it's as if God is saying it's worth repeating; "I take sexual sin so seriously and so should you because of what it does to you."

One commentator wrote; "Any culture which chooses to walk deeper and deeper into perversion will experience natural, inevitable repercussions and will eventually collapse as God's laws of nature take effect."

20 If a man lies with his uncle's wife, he has uncovered his uncle's nakedness. They shall bear their sin; they shall die childless. 21 If a man takes his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing. He has uncovered his brother's nakedness. They shall be childless.

- At first glance this may seem a little strange that God would mete out the punishment of childlessness for certain incestuous sins.
- This is where the cultural dynamics come in to play and are far removed from the cultural of our day. To be childless was to be cursed.
- Even in the Middle-East today, if you have many sons, you are considered to be very blessed. Your children were your social security.

22 You shall therefore keep all My statutes and all My judgments, and perform them, that the land where I am bringing you to dwell may not vomit you out. 23 And you shall not walk in the statutes of the nation which I am casting out before you; for they commit all these things, and therefore I abhor them. 24 But I have said to you, "You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey." I am the LORD your God, who has separated you from the peoples.

- It's important to hear the heart of God here; He wants His children to walk in obedience so that He could bless and prosper them.
- However, He warns them that if they walk in disobedience, then they will be vomited out, because they committed these abhorrent sins.

"God pleads with Israel to obey Him, that the same fate would not befall Israel - unfortunately, eventually it did - and the land did "cast out" Israel, resulting in the exile both for the northern nation of Israel and the southern nation of Judah. But these laws weren't only so that Israel could possess the land; they were also so God could possess Israel - so they would be holy to Me, for I the Lord and holy . . . that you should be Mine. Sometimes we think what God mostly wants is our *obedience*; but there is a sense in which we can give God our obedience without giving Him ourselves (the Pharisees did this!). What God really wants is *us* - and if that is truly given, the obedience will follow."

David Guzik

25 You shall therefore distinguish between clean animals and unclean, between unclean birds and clean, and you shall not make yourselves abominable by beast or by bird, or by any kind of living thing that creeps on the ground, which I have separated from you as unclean. 26 And you shall be holy to Me, for I the LORD am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be Mine.

- Simply put, God wants His people to be separate and different from the world because His people belong to Him and not to the world.

"We must be separated from sin and sinners unto a holy God, ...He used the Jews to be the medium of communicating his truth to men, so now He is eager to use his Church; if only she will allow Him to deliver her from the taint of sin and the world, and separate her for a peculiar possession unto Himself. Let us individually yield ourselves to the blessed influences of the Holy Spirit, that He may realize in us the purpose for which He has called us. ...Rejoice greatly when God says, "Thou art mine." We also can take up his words, and answer back, "Thou also art mine." Let us be glad, if we know that the oil of separation has come on our needs, and let us walk worthily of our high calling, separated to the Holy Ghost, and counting it sacrilege to be used for any unholy purpose."

F.B. Meyer Devotionals on Leviticus ([http://preceptaustin.org/leviticus\\_sermon\\_illustrations\\_2.htm](http://preceptaustin.org/leviticus_sermon_illustrations_2.htm))

27 'A man or a woman who is a medium, or who has familiar spirits, shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones. Their blood shall be upon them.'

- There is a clear distinction between verse six and verse 27. In verse six, those dabbling in these occultic practices were to be cut off.
- Here in verse 27, it's not to those dabbling in the occult it is to those who functioned as practitioners of these occultic rituals.
- In other words, the judgment is greater because for the practitioners because they are the ones who are leading people into the occult.